

Names, Mere Names.

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The recent publication of a list of the Names of British Butterflies seems destined to call forth numerous—but, let us hope, not acrimonious—discussions on the correct usage of some of these names. All Entomologists are perforce interested in the subject of Nomenclature; whether they call their captures by English or scientific names, or even by names of their own invention, they are, consciously or not, employing some system of nomenclature. The “ordinary collector” cares little what names he uses and knows little and cares less about the literature and rules on which such names are based; what he wants is a name which he can use for his captures and which he is reasonably certain to find in the few text-books and journals which he owns and also to find in use by other collectors whom he meets. The more advanced student is not so easily satisfied: he requires to know, not merely that the name he uses is the current one, but that it is absolutely the most correct one and he is prepared to discard—not without regret, as a rule—any name which he used yesterday in favour of another which he considers to be more correct to-day, and to scrap that again to-morrow if need be. At the same time, as each one, even of the most advanced students, has to attain his results from a combination of knowledge and judgment varying with the individual, it is no matter for surprise that their results are not always concordant.

In spite of the apparent diversity in requirements of the two classes, both are really aiming at the same thing, stability of nomenclature, and both are slowly attaining it. The corrected names, which are established by the more advanced workers, find their way into catalogues and journals and more popular text-books and are in current use by the “mere collector” before he realizes it or has really had time to grumble at “these constant changes of names.” When I first began to collect British Butterflies, nearly fifty years ago, our commonest British Blue was called *alexis* and another one was called *adonis*; anyone who referred to these two species under these names in a current journal would leave most of his readers in ignorance of his meaning. Even the vernacular names change in the course of time and most of the present-day collectors would be puzzled to know what common butterflies are intended by the following names, in use one hundred years ago: the Alderman, the Primrose, the Queen, the Wood Lady, the Yellow Crescent, the Silver Spot, the Prince, the Princess, the Golden Eye, the Lead Blue, the Great Streak Skipper, and the Clouded Skipper.

Nomenclature is a complex and to most people a “dry as dust” study, but the student occasionally comes across a few cases which may raise a smile. Some names convey an obvious meaning (*e.g.*, *Gonoptera*, *Coleophora*), some are derived from classical or personal or geographical names or from foodplants or habits, and some are mere agglomerations of letters without any meaning at all. Many of Walker’s generic names, such as *Dudua*, *Eddara*, *Edosa*, *Maroga*, belong to this last category. Walker seems to have prepared lists of such names and to have used them as required for new genera; sometimes he apparently forgot to cross out those which he had already used and used them

again; thus, *Marisba* and *Tirasia*, used by him in 1863, were again employed for other genera in 1864. The classical expert who searches for a meaning in some of these names may come up against a snag at times; thus, *Dolidiria* may appear to be a good classical name until one discovers that it commemorates "Dolly dear"! The pseudo-classical explanation of *Heusimene*, Stephens, may also be referred to; according to the learned authors of "An Accentuated List of the British Lepidoptera, with Hints on the Derivation of the Names, published by the Entomological Societies of Oxford and Cambridge: 1858" it is "derived from two Greek words meaning to burn and the moon: the forewing having an *ashy lunule* on its inner margin," which seems a very convincing explanation until one finds that it was originally merely a *lapsus* for the name *Hemimene*, Hb. Stephens himself remarks (*Ill. Brit. Ent., Haust.* IV. 403) that his abstract of the British Lepidoptera extracted from Hübner's Verzeichniss was "made very rapidly (having a very limited time to take it)," so that his *lapsus* in this case is comprehensible. Some names, such as *Synia*, Dup., *Luperina*, Bdv., *Epunda*, Dup., *Hyppa*, Dup., quite defeated the authors of the Oxford and Cambridge List, who, however, attempted to derive *Olindia*, Gn.; from "Olinda, a town of South America," although quoting Guenée himself to the effect that this name was "sans étymologie." A list of new names, proposed by Kirkaldy in 1904 (*Entom.* XXXVII. 279-280), included such gems as *Marichisme*, *Isachisme*, *Polychisme*, *Dolichisme* and *Alchisme*; here again the seacher for a classical meaning must remain satisfied with the quite non-classical "Mary, kiss me," etc. Such names are mere inexcusable frivolities and possibly in this case the Editor's eagle eye was blinded by the reflected glory of the name *Southia* proposed in the same list. Perhaps one may be permitted to speculate whether the name *Ofatulena* belongs to the same category as it is connected in origin with a group of names comprising *Gwendolina*, *Barbara*, *Suleima*, *Sonia*, *Gretchena*, *Griselda*, and others derived from feminine names. *Emmelina*, Tutt 1905, was nondescript and hence invalid and still-born, but was fathered by Forbes in 1924.

Then we come across the so-called "gibberish names" which we owe mostly to Kearfott, who described a number of species under such names as *bobana*, *cocana*, *dodana*, *fofana* . . . , *bana*, *dana*, *fana* . . . ; Mr. Meyrick has dealt with these (*Ent. Mo. Mag.* XLVIII. 32-36: 1912) and boldly renamed them and his action had at least the effect of stopping the spate of these nonsense-names.

In forming new names some authors have favoured an anagram of a previous name; thus, Walker described the genera *Datana* and *Nadata*. French authors have been especially fond of anagrams, one of the most striking being *Suhpalaesa*, which is merely *Ascalaphus* written backwards.

Actually non-existent names sometimes get into literature and give a great deal of unnecessary trouble in running them down. Often these are due to some error in copying the original name, as in the case of *Heusimene* (*Hemimene*) noticed above; *Darthula* was printed as *Dartrula* in Waterhouse's *Zoological Index* and as *Darrhula* in the *Zoological Record*. Sometimes they are due to the use of manuscript names under which specimens have been sent out or are standing in collections; if, as often happens, the manuscript name is suppressed

by its author, who may eventually describe the genus or species under another name, whilst the manuscript name is used by other writers, it is often difficult to connect the two names.

Some names have been applied to specimens defective in some way. Although not an entomological exhibit, we may refer to the Bird of Paradise named *apoda* by Linnaeus, the skins brought to Europe in those days having no legs. In his *Supplementary Catalogue of the British Tineidae* (1851) Stainton described *Elachista? decimella*, of which he remarks that "the only specimen I have seen, having been skewered with a No. 10 solid-headed pin, has the head and thorax so distorted that their due investigation is impossible"; hence we are led to suppose that the name *decimella* has reference to the size of the pin used for the specimen. The species described by Linnaeus under *Alucita* seem to have derived their names rather from the author's desire to have a series of names running from *monodactyla* to *hexadactyla* than from the actual structure of the insects described; *didactyla* is a mere literary description of Ray's account of *hexadactyla* and of Rëaumur's figures of *pentadactyla*, whilst *tridactyla* and *tetradactyla* are sexes of the same species.

For convenience of consultation Lists of Generic Names are usually arranged in alphabetical order and in this connection one may note several attempts to secure the position of "Head of the List." Walker's *Abacena* (from ABC) was an early effort and at present the record seems to be held by the Buprestid genus *Aaata*, Semenow. The Berlin Nomenclator has only slowly progressed as far as the letter P at present and the last name in Scudder is *Zyxomma*; possibly, however, some ingenious author has since captured the wooden spoon with some combination commencing with Zyz.

Owing to the fact that they are praeoccupied, some generic names which have currency are really homonyms and hence, according to the rule "once a homonym, always a synonym," should be synonyms, but it so happens that these genera have not yet been renamed and so have no valid names of which the current invalid names can be synonyms. I will not mention these names here in case some over-zealous nomenclator should rush into print to rename them without having any idea of what the insects are or whether such genera are tenable and really require to be renamed. This has happened too frequently in the past and has merely resulted in encumbering our Catalogues with a mass of useless and unwanted synonyms; for example, Spuler in 1910 proposed the genonym *Chapmania* for *semipurpurella*, Stephens; *Chapmania*, Spuler, was nondescript and hence invalid and also redundant as *semipurpurella* was the type of *Eriocrania*, Zeller 1850; *Chapmania* being praeoccupied, Strand in 1917 proposed the name *Allochapmania* to replace it, the nett result being that *Eriocrania* was provided with two useless synonyms.

Some well-known current names are incorrectly used. Thus, in 1811 Haworth described the genus *Fumaria* but in 1812 (*Trans. Ent. Soc. London* I. 340) renamed it *Fumea* on the ground that the name *Fumaria* was already employed in Botany. Entomology takes no regard of Botanical Names and Haworth, having once published his name *Fumaria*, had no special right to alter it. But such cases are perhaps too near the borderline of controversial Nomenclature to be

pursued further within the limits of a short article which only purports to deal with what may be called some Curiosities of Nomenclature.

According to W. S. Gilbert "the policeman's lot is not a happy one," but possibly it was brightened a little when Moore named a *Phalera* as *parivala* (*paravala*, an Indian policeman) and followed this up a few years later by calling another species *bobi* ("Bobby").

The Cottian Alps and Turin in June-July, 1933.

By REV. E. B. ASHBY, F.R.E.S., F.Z.S.

(Concluded from page 107.)

10. OULX. 3,500 ft.

Except on the dates before-specified, I spent the rest of my holiday entirely at Oulx, my first day's collecting there being on 21st June and my last day's collecting on 11th July. The two grounds I used were the Riffe Range by the bed of the river Dora Riparia, and the path which leads in a westerly direction past the two lakes. I refer my readers to Dr. Verity's account of Oulx and environs in the former pages of this magazine (Vol. XXXVIII. new series, No. 7 and 8, July-August, 1926). For this particular season I used the ground by the lakes the more frequently, as I found it much the more sheltered this year. I took the following insects:

RHOPALOCERA.—*Polyommatus* (*Hirsutina*) *damon*, race *ausonia*, Vrtý.; *P. hylas* = *dorylas*, Hb. race *micromargarita*, Vrtý.; *P. escheri* race *balestrei*, Frhst.; *Agríades coridon* race *rufosplendens*, Vrtý.; *Cupido mininus*, Fuessly; *Klugia lynceus*, Esp. = *spini*, Schiff. race *major*, Obth.; *L. sinapis* race *magna*, I gen., *lathyri*, Hb.; *Euchloë euphenoides* race *alpium*, Vrtý.; *P. daplidice*, L.; *Aporia crataegi* race *basanius*, Frhst., a rather small and abundant race; *P. apollo* race *oulxensis*, Vrtý.; *C. pamphilus*, race *postaustralis*, Vrtý. I gen. *australis*, Vrtý.; *Epinephele jurtina* race *phormia*, Frhst.; *M. galathea* race *pedemontii*, Vrtý., very fresh; *Nytha actaea* exerge *ferula*, F. (= *cordula*, F.) race *orsiera*, De Prunner; *Hipparchia semele* race *cadmus*, Frhst.; *Limenitis rivularis*, race *herculeana*, Stichel, well distributed; *M. cinxia* race *avelatia*, Frhst.; *P. maera* race *herdonia*, Frhst.; *Powellia sertorius* (*sao*) race *alioides*, Vrtý.; *H. carthami*, Hb.; *Brenthis euphrosyne*; *B. amathusia* race *titania*, Esp., abundant and fresh by the lakes; *M. dictynna*; *M. aurelia* race *imitatrix*, Vrtý., by lakes. (One fine var. with great increase of black markings). *M. pseudathalia* race *celaduzza*, Frhst.; *H. serratulae*, Rbr.; *H. carlinae*, Rbr.; *Adopaea lineola* race *ludoviciae*, Mabille; *A. sylvanus*, Esp.; *C. semiargus* race *montana*, M.D.; *A. medon*, Hüfn.; and var. *saluacis*; *P. idas*, L. = *argyrognomon*, Bergstr. race *callioides*, trans ad *alpina*, Vrtý. and Berce; *P. icarus*, Rott., I gen. *A. aglaia* race *emiflorens*, Vrtý.; *B. ino*; *A. niobe*, L. race *pinguis*, Vrtý.; *M. phoebe* race *syllion*, Frhst.; *P. argus* race *philonomus*, Bergst.

HETEROCCERA.—*Zygaena achilleae* race *alpestris*, Burg. (= *alpina*, Obth.); *Cerura furcula*, L.; *Notodonta tritophus*, S.-K.; *Agrophila trabealis*; *Pyralis trabealis*; *Ino geryon*, Hb.; *Ino globulariae*, Hb.; *Z. purpuralis* race *nubigena*, Led.; *Z. loniceræ* race *alpiungigas*, Vrtý. (= *major*, Frey.); *Syntomis phegea*, *Heterogynis penella*, Hb.; *Acrionicta megacephala*, Fb.; *Leucania conigera*, Fb.; *Omia cymbalariae*,